DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 431 693 SO 030 880

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TITLE Civic Education in the Czech Republic: Curriculum Reform for Democratic Citizenship. Evaluator's Report.
INSTITUTION Charles Univ., Prague (Czechoslovakia). Documentation and Information Centre of the European Communities.; Iowa Univ., Iowa City. Coll. of Education.
SPONS AGENCY United States Information Agency, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 1999-01-00
NOTE 38p.; Barbara Malak-Minkiewicz was a major collaborator on this report.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Citizenship; *Citizenship Education; *Civics; *Curriculum Development; Democracy; Evaluation Criteria; Evaluation Methods; High Schools; Social Studies
IDENTIFIERS *Czech Republic

ABSTRACT

This report evaluates a project undertaken in the Czech Republic to create lesson scenarios to revise the existing social studies curricular framework for the third form of secondary school (ages 17-18) with special reference to the overarching objectives for civic education reform started in 1989. These objectives included the elimination of Marxist-Leninist perspectives in the curriculum; a renewed study of Czech history, culture, heritage, and geography; and a pedagogical shift from transmitting information to passive students to the prompting of inquiry and active learning. The evaluator's activities included a presentation about evaluation to the lesson design team of Czechs, development of draft versions of instruments to gather feedback about the lessons, attendance at meetings at which field testing was planned, observation of training for computer-assisted simulation, attendance at other relevant meetings, and preparation of the report. Three assumptions and decisions framed the evaluation: (1) the focus should be almost exclusively on the lessons being developed, their quality, and how they were being received by teachers and students during the field test period; (2) use of several methods of data collection and sources of data was the only way to assure that the necessary depth of information about the lessons could be obtained; and (3) the "center of gravity" for both collecting and analyzing that data should be in the Czech Republic and not at the Universities of Maryland or Iowa. The report outlines the project in detail and summarizes the strengths and weaknesses in its planning and design, the lessons, training and capacity building, and communication and motivation. Contains a table and 8 notes. Appendix 1 features lesson topics, types of student participation, and teacher and student feedback. Appendix 2 contains notes on interviewing teachers. (BT)

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by Judith Torney-Purta

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Evaluator's Report
Civic Education in the Czech Republic: Curriculum Reform for Democratic Citizenship

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Overview of the Project

This project's aim was to create lesson scenarios in order to revise the existing social studies curricular framework for the third form of secondary school (ages 17 and 18) in the Czech Republic with special reference to the overarching objectives for civic education reform started in 1989. These objectives included the elimination of Marxist-Leninist perspectives in the curriculum, a renewed study of Czech history, culture, heritage, and geography, and a pedagogical shift from transmitting information to passive students to the prompting of inquiry and active learning. The project was conducted as a joint effort of the pedagogical faculty at Charles University in Prague, the Czech Republic and the University of Iowa College of Education, funded by the United State Information Agency and began in mid-1995. The major written product of the collaboration was a book of sample lessons on 21 topics exemplifying the curricular objectives outlined above and an accompanying teacher's manual. For other major components of the project, see the ERIC Digest EDO-SO-97-5 prepared by Gregory Hamot, Co-Director of the Project and other project documents.

Overview of the Evaluation

The responsibility of the evaluator was to provide commentary throughout the project as formative evaluation and summative evaluation of the lessons and manual (and to the extent possible at a distance, the process of development, try-out, and revision). I as the evaluator

- made a presentation about evaluation to the lesson design team of Czechs in Iowa City in October 1996;
- developed draft versions of instruments to gather feedback about the lessons,

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[1]The major collaborator on this report is Barbara Malak-Minkiewicz, Ph D., Senior Program Officer, IEA Headquarters, Amsterdam. Also of great assistance in the data collection and analysis in Prague were Pavla Palechova, Radmila Dostalova, Bohuslav Dvorak, and Vera Dvorak. Special assistance at the University of Iowa, in addition to Greg Hamot and Peter Hlebowitsh, the Co-Directors, was given by Joe Bishop.

- attended and made a presentation at meetings at which field testing was planned and the feedback sheets for teachers and students to use in evaluating the lessons were finalized in Prague in January 1997,
- facilitated the attendance of two Czech participants at a meeting with University of Maryland personnel providing training for the ICONS computer-assisted international simulation in Berlin in February 1997 (with the hope of providing narrative material from students for the evaluation as well as introducing a computer-assisted mode of communication),
- attended a meeting in Iowa City in July 1997 at which the data were examined by the bi-national team,
- attended and made a presentation at the conference at which the book of revised lessons was released to a broader group of teachers in the Czech Republic in August 1998
- in advance of that meeting provided to all of those from the U.S. who planned to attend a brief written report of the data collected including suggestions about ways to tailor their presentations to the perspectives of the Czech educators as it had emerged from the lesson evaluations.
- prepared the summary table in Appendix 1 and the text of this report

Barbara Malak-Minkiewicz, a social psychologist who was involved as an expert of the Polish Ministry of Education in some civic education reform projects in Poland in the early 1990s, also attended the meetings in January 1997, July 1997 and August 1998 and reviewed this report, prepared one section of it, and prepared suggestions for interviewing teachers (Appendix 2).

Three assumptions and decisions framed this evaluation, assumptions that differ somewhat from those which frame many evaluations.

The first assumption was that the evaluation should be focused almost exclusively on the lessons being developed, their quality and how they were being received by teachers and students during the field test period. The purpose of teaching the lessons in the spring of 1997 was to suggest improvements to be made and material to be added. Each teacher who was participating in piloting taught only a small portion of the 20 lessons that had been developed. Thus any given class of students was exposed to only a partial segment of the curriculum, and different classes had different lessons. Time was limited, so that some classes had a few as three or four hours of these lessons. Teachers were encouraged to make selections from the lesson materials and to adapt them to student interests and needs. For all of these reasons it was not appropriate to conduct any kind of evaluation of student outcomes (knowledge or attitudes). Evaluation of student outcomes is appropriate only when there is an agreed upon program of lessons which each participating teacher and class uses and when it is possible to document a similar implementation of the program of lesson-scenarios by different teachers. Ideally in such outcomes evaluation the classes to participate have also been randomly assigned. Even the minimum conditions for an outcomes evaluation can be fulfilled only after the field test period has been completed and

a full and relatively final curricular program is implemented.

The second assumption was that using several methods of data collection and sources of data was the only way to assure that the necessary depth of information about the lessons could be obtained. Further, evaluation should be an integral part of the entire project and not confined to a period at the end. Data were collected from teachers and from a small number of students (2 to 5 per classroom per lesson). These data were both quantitative (in the form of ratings) and qualitative (in the form of written answers to questions about the lesson, as well as in group and individual interviews). Some of these data (e.g., teacher and student ratings) could be examined separately by lesson or group of lessons. In addition to providing data for the evaluation, asking students as well as teachers for their opinions was a way of communicating that this was a new model for designing curriculum. The teachers were treated as experts from whom the evaluators and project designers were seeking advice in order to improve the lessons.

The third assumption was that the "center of gravity" for both collecting and analyzing that data should be in the Czech Republic and not at the University of Maryland or the University of Iowa. This created a very heavy workload for the Czechs, since materials to be used in data collection had to be translated from English into Czech, then the responses had to be translated from Czech back to English. If this report and its appendices are to be fully utilized, it will have to be translated again back into Czech. The side benefit of decentralizing the evaluation in this way is that there is now a cadre of individual specialists in civic education in the Czech Republic who are prepared to conduct their own evaluations of similar projects.[2] If one believes that the sustainability of a project such as this depends upon a continually expanding group of teachers and specialists who are engaging in an ongoing dialogue about the reform of civics teaching, this approach to evaluation is clearly preferable to other models.

Details of the Evaluation in the Czech Republic

Draft versions of the rating sheets to be used by teachers and students for each lesson were prepared at the University of Maryland based on an examination of the objectives of the project and on previous experience. The student instrument was one page per lesson and included ratings of how interested the student had been and how much they participated. The teacher instrument was about 3 page long and included ratings and 17 open ended questions (see details in next section).

During a project meeting in Prague in January 1997 a group of about ten met to finalize this instrument, including those who had been asked to translate the instruments. That meeting, in which the Czechs suggested many changes to the wording (either because the original

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[2]See also Judith Torney-Purta (1998), Evaluating programs designed to teach international content and negotiation skills, *International Negotiation*, **3**, pp. 77-97.

formulation was difficult to translate or because it seemed an inappropriate or trivial question) was another example of the importance of the Czech perspective in the overall project design. Other sessions at this meeting provided training in the evaluation methods.

Following that meeting, the evaluator laid out the expectations for each Czech participant.

> Each of the 9 pilot teachers was expected to fill out a feedback sheet for each lesson taught and give these to researchers/ coordinators being sure lesson number and title were on the sheet. They were also asked to choose 3 or 4 students during each class period who would fill out the student feedback sheets (being sure not to pick the same students each time). They were also expected to participate in an interview at the end of the period and choose students to participate in a group interview (focus group).
>
> Members of the project team were designated as "researcher /coordinators" and had special responsibilities. They were to explain this procedure to teachers and encourage them to fill out the sheets, reassuring both groups that the purpose of their information is to improve the lessons and not to evaluate teachers. They were also to collect the sheets and conduct the interviews. The senior researcher arranged for the translation of the comments, then condensed them on summary sheets which were presented to the evaluator and to the group in Iowa City in July 1997. The comments in the original Czech were sent to the coordinator who was making revisions in the lessons before their publication.

The implementation of the field test and evaluation took place as follows. Every lesson was taught at least once and in most cases twice. There was considerable variation in the way that the same lesson was taught by different teachers (for example merging some sections or stressing facts rather than discussion). Researchers experienced a heavy workload and too little time for making summaries. It seemed that the teachers accepted evaluation as part of lesson development, and that their comments could for the most part be integrated into the revision. Special attention was paid to revising lessons where more than one teacher saw problems. Because of close contact between the authors of lessons, researchers and teachers it was possible to actually check out some suggested revisions, e.g., could this be changed in this way to meet your criticism? Ratings were sometimes used as a basis for discussion with teachers. Often teachers said they wanted more concrete examples, but it was difficult to add as many pages as would have been necessary to do this. Some teachers thought goals were too numerous and detailed, and many of their suggestions for simplification were taken. It was clear that the teachers needed more in-service training not only in content but in pedagogical science and methods. They often did not know how to evaluate student interest or were unused to selecting some material and leaving out other material.

The feedback sheets were collected, tabulated and translated for entry onto summary sheets.

The next section represents the evaluator's summary in text, andAppendix 1 represents a review of both the content of specific lessons (in the first two columns, prepared by two of the Czechs responsible for the lesson construction) and the evaluator's summary of material on the translated rating sheets filled out by both students and by teachers (in the third column). This table thus presents both the lessons' contents and methods and the way they were evaluated by the teachers who taught them and the students in those classes.

In addition 6 teachers were interviewed, 5 face-to-face and 1 in written form. It was reported that most interviews were conducted with a "good atmosphere." One refused, one said there was time only for informal comments, and one could not be scheduled. There was considerable variation in the teachers -- several felt very competent (even inspired) and reported having exceptional results, one or two were enthusiastic but had difficulty accommodating to the new types of teaching, one or two were not positive about the experience feeling that it required too much work.

There were also focus groups with student in the six of the schools (same as those where interviews were conducted). One teacher conducted focus groups on her own.

It was originally hoped that ICONS Computer-Assisted International Simulation at the University of Maryland Department of Government and Politics could be integrated as a source of both new modes of active student participation and of data from students for to be used as illustrations in the evaluation. With that in mind, two Czech project participants were supported with funds from the evaluation to attend a training meeting in Berlin. Two schools volunteered to participate, but one had such serious technical problems that it was impossible for them to be fully integrated. One school did participate in a Designing Democracy cross-national on-line conference in which they were communicating with students from the U.S. and Canada. The following interchange included a message from the Czech students:

> From Simulation Coordinator: (April 21, 1997, 12:46)
> Here's a hypothetical situation. Suppose a military leader in Libroslavia (a mythical country just becoming independent) offered to take control of the government for several years until Libroslavia could become stable economically and political. Would it be a good idea to let him take over? Why or why not?
>
> From team of students in USA: (12:51)
> No, the idea that military leader should take over Libroslavia would not be beneficial. History has proven that there are a lot of military leaders that go in with that belief and end up as dictators. This is not true for all, but in most cases the situation does apply.
>
> From team of students in Canada: (12:53)
> We have would have no problem with a military leader as long as he is actively democratic. He must be able to unite ethnic cultures of the nation. We would also

would like to remind the USA that some of their great leaders were Military Leaders.

From the team of students in Czech Republic: (12.55)
The problem is that the military leader would tend to keep the power as long as possible. Nobody can learn democracy in dictatorship. We suggest Libroslavia to accept advisors from democratic countries, but the people of Libroslavia have to govern their country by themselves.

The Czech students are to be commended for a well thought out message, coherent and entered into the Web system promptly. As computers become a more widespread part of the technology available in Czech schools we can imagine that possibilities for this participation will increase. The ICONS project, which is ongoing at the University of Maryland, has issued an open invitation for the future for free participation in any of its simulation exercises by any interested Czech schools where students can communicate in English and where there is access to the World Wide Web.[3]

The remainder of the report deals with data collected in a systematic fashion from the participating field test sites.

Data from Feedback Sheets: Quantitative Ratings and Qualitative Comments

Feedback sheets, containing spaces for both ratings and for open comments, were filled out by teachers and students at the conclusion of each lesson. They were summarized and then translated into English (thanks to the Czech collaborators). The original sheets (in Czech) and summaries were provided to those revising the curriculum for the purpose of making improvements in the text (and making deletions and/or additions of new materials).

From Students' Ratings.

Students (usually 3-4 per class) filled out two scales for each lesson, one rating on a 4 point scale how actively they were involved during the lesson and the other how interested they were during the lesson. Student ratings within a class were averaged. Taken across the 72 times that lessons were taught, these ratings were correlated .68, meaning that those who reported that they were actively involved were also more interested.

The 21 lessons were placed into eight categories. Table 1 gives information about the types of lessons and mean ratings of student interest and activity. On a 4 point scale the mean (average) across lessons for ratings of Activity was between 2.40 and 2.85, and for Interest between 2.76 and 3.53, tabulated by lesson category. The students expressed the highest

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[3]The contact person at the University of Maryland who worked with the Czech educators and could be contacted for materials about future participation is Beth Blake, bblake@bss2.umd.edu.

amount of interest and the greatest amount of participation for the lessons categorized under Social Problems and under Political Theory, the lowest for lessons categorized under Domestic Institutions and under World Issues and Institutions (and to some extent under Law). Other lesson categories received moderate ratings.

Some contrasts with the content of the civics curriculum in the U.S. may be of interest. The teaching of Institutions seems quite similar between the countries in its basic organization (though the specific details of content differ). The same is true for Civic Action and Law. The greatest contrast in content was in the Political Theory category. The Czech materials were oriented toward political philosophy and the ideology of democracy much more than would be the case in the U.S.

From Students' Comments:

Students also answered open-ended questions.

> What did you learn today in class?
> What class activities helped you to learn today?
> What did you not understand today?
> What would you recommend to authors to change so that the student like you would gain as much as possible?

There was a good match between what teachers were teaching and what students said they learned (see open ended comments cited later). Many wanted even more opportunities for discussion and concrete materials/visual aids or more about contemporary problems. Students expressed difficulty in understanding many of the same issues that students all over the world have trouble grasping, for example concepts such as recession, inflation, or embargoes. Other comments reflect a common attitude of puzzlement about why countries engage in aggressive foreign policies, why there is so much hate among political parties, why censorship exists, and why state and people don't do more about violence.

Students' comments were generally positive about the lessons, noting especially that they learned how to express or assert their opinions and listen to others, how to face up to problems, and how think carefully and deeply about issues.

Table 1
Student Activity and Interest Ratings by Lesson Category
(Means Across Classes/Lessons
and Rank of Means within Column in [ ])

Category/Topic	Lesson Numbers	Activity	Interest
I Political Theory (polit. philosophy, democratic ideology)	1-3	2.85 [2]	3.26 [2]
II The State (history, contemporary evaluation)	4-6	2.74 [4]	3.20 [3]
III Domestic Institutions (Constitution, executive, legislative, judicial, municipal, elections)	7-10 part of 13	2.58 [7]	2.82 [7]
IV Civic Action (Skills and behavior letter writing, NGO's, public meetings, parties)	11-13	2.68 [5]	2.99 [5]
V Law (Constitutionally based)	14-15	2.76 [3]	2.76 [8]
VI Economics (Free market, money and banking)	16-17	2.60 [6]	3.09 [4]
VII Social Problems (AIDS and drugs)	18	2.86 [1]	3.53 [1]
VIII World Issues and Institutions (Ecology, terrorism, UN, NATO, EU)	19-21	2.40 [8]	2.93 [6]

From Teachers' Ratings

The teachers were asked to fill out 11 rating scales (4-point rating) for each teaching of a lesson

This lesson leads the students to
participate actively in the class
cooperate in groups
gain citizenship knowledge
acquire active citizenship skills
develop citizenship attitudes

Overall this lesson
gave me an opportunity to teach a subject matter important for its content
allowed students to discuss their opinions
allowed students to draw their own conclusions
had about the right amount of material
objectives of the lesson were met
was interesting to my students

The means across ratings were in ranges similar to those for students, ranging from 2 75 (extent to which the lesson allowed teaching of active citizenship skills) to 3 48 (perceived student interest) The modal (most frequent) response was a 3 (somewhat) for all 11 ratings

In addition to making the ratings, teachers were asked several pages of open-ended queries about each lesson

The following subject matter was left out
The following activities were left out
The following subject matter was added
The following activities were added
The following subject matter was revised in this way
The following activities were reorganized in this way
Other changes I made
What are the strengths of this lesson from the contents' point of view?
What were some positive things that happened during the class time or activities that communicated the point of the lesson well to students?
What are the strengths of the lesson from the goals' point of view?
What are the weaknesses of the lesson from the contents' point of view?
Did anything appear in the lesson that students did not understand or did not get?
Were there any negative things that happened during the class time (e g, attitudes

of students?)
How could the material for this lesson be improved?
Should anything still be left out?
Should anything still be added?
Other changes that should be made?

The patterns of correlations within the teacher data give us some insights into the implementation of these lessons in the classroom (although these must be viewed as suggestive, since there were 9 teachers and 72 lessons). First, the teachers were not very accurate informants about student interest or how involved the students were in a particular lesson. The correlations between averaged students' ratings and teachers' ratings of perceived interest by lesson were low and not statistically significant. It is important to gain both perspectives when getting feedback on implementation in the classroom.

One question given to the teachers, the extent to which the lesson led the students to "cooperate in groups," appears to have been misleading. This rating showed few correlations with other ratings, and the comments suggest that in Czech classrooms fruitful discussion takes place not only when the teacher places students into small groups asked to cooperate but also in larger group settings. "Cooperative groups" and "cooperative learning" are terms much more frequently used in American pedagogical discourse. In Czech classrooms having discussions where students can voice their opinions is important, but the size of the group or its assigned task as a "cooperative group" is not so important. In the Czech classroom the pertinent contrast seems to be between an exchange of opinions in a discussion and lecture or individual reading/writing.

Substantively it appears that fostering discussion as a part of the training provided to Czech teachers should consist not only of models based on American cooperative learning methods, but should encompass other methods of ensuring a climate for free exchange of opinions within the classroom whether in a small group or a larger classroom group.

Likewise the question about whether the lesson "had about the right amount of material" did not correlate well with other teacher ratings (e.g. student activity, interest, whether knowledge, attitudes or skills were gained). This is understandable if we consider that for about 90% of the lessons teachers reported making some kind of alteration in the material (deletions, additions, or both). It is clear that the large majority of teachers tailored their teaching to the students in their classrooms (including vocational students). They reported adding examples from real life, newspaper articles relating to the content, charts making comparisons (for example of markets at the local, national and international level) or giving statistics (about vandalism), explanations of new terms (especially in economics), new student activities (such as an assignment to formulate a meeting agenda), and materials to tailor the lesson to the Czech situation (such as lists of Czech achievements in various fields). Again from these qualitative findings it appears that these highly professional teachers made judgments so that the amount of material covered in the teaching was appropriate. When there was too much material, they cut some sections or left activities

out. The success of teaching different lessons did not seem to be influenced by the fact that some lesson plans originally had more material to be covered than others. When the next group of teachers gets the revised lessons, however, it will probably be important that the instructions make clear that the teacher can choose from materials suggested and/or add materials. Teachers may also need training in how to make these decisions.

There are quite a number of clues to the ways in which the teachers creatively worked with the materials to foster an appropriate classroom climate and coherent subject-matter content learning for the students within the correlations between ratings.

Let us look at the correlations between perceptions that the lesson led students to "gain citizenship knowledge," "acquire active citizenship skills", and "develop citizenship attitudes." The correlations here are among the highest in the matrix (.82 between knowledge and attitudes, .77 between skills and attitudes, and .65 between knowledge and skills). Most teachers thought that those lessons which succeeded in one respect succeeded in other respects (and those lessons that were less successful in one respect were also less successful in others).

Correlations between the "objectives of the lesson were met" and the other rating scales can indicate what kind of lessons were most successful in the teachers' views. Gaining knowledge is the most highly correlated to this rating of the meeting of objectives (r= .74), with a slightly lower correlation between objectives-achievement and "developing attitudes" (r=.62) and a much lower correlation with "acquiring active citizenship skills" (r= .49). One gets a sense that it was somewhat unclear to these teachers what "active citizenship skills" meant and how the lessons were addressing them. The suggestion here is similar to that offered regarding cooperative groups. Training programs should consider developing a list of skills relating to citizenship which includes but is not limited to American formulations of active citizenship skills. For example, there may be skills of analysis of text, skills of listening, and skills of reflective thought that are important within the Czech context which should be represented.

Next, let us examine the correlations (r's) within the set of items that dealt with student participation and involvement. Lessons in which students are "led to discuss their opinions" are also lessons in which students are "allowed to draw their own conclusions" (r= .71). Further, lessons in which students "participate actively in the classroom" are those in which the lesson was "interesting to students (r= .65) and students were "led to discuss their opinions" (r= .64). The teachers clearly seemed to have gotten the message that discussion was important and felt that, at least in some classes, they were able to get the students into this mode of learning and classroom process.

Further evidence of that comes from the following. Teachers tended to perceive that the "objectives of the lessons were met" very well in the following situations:

"lesson gave me an opportunity to teach a subject matter" (r= .77),

"lesson was interesting to my students" (r= 74),
"lesson led student to gain citizenship knowledge" (r= 72),
"lesson led students to participate actively in the classroom" (r= 69),
"lesson led students to develop citizenship attitudes" (r= 62)
"lesson allowed students to discuss their opinions" (r= 54)
"lesson allowed students to draw their own conclusions." (r= 52)

As previously noted the correlations with "led students to develop active citizenship skills," and "had about the right amount of material" were lower (r's of .49 and .39 respectively). The correlation with "allowed students to cooperate in groups" was .06 and not statistically significant. This suggest that the teachers felt that the pedagogy and the content worked together to provide lessons which met their objectives. Discussion and participation were important parts of the lessons, which were also shaped by the presentation of important subject matter content.

From Teachers' Comments:

Further insights about the process of the field testing of lessons can be illustrated from some comments about individual lessons made by teachers (presented first) and students (presented in brackets).

> The lesson shows the necessity of encountering different opinions in democratic society. [Student comment: learned from research and discussion] (Concept of democracy lesson)
>
> I liked the lively reworking of history and that students came to definitions of patriotism on their own. [Student comments: learned from discussion.] (Nation and state in Czech history lesson)
>
> I liked the way practical tasks supported previous more theoretical knowledge, students by determining which right is most important understood interconnections and importance of rights for freedom of man, students may get less amount of knowledge but those facts that are gained are deeper and more pertinent because they are based on own experience and emotion. [Student comments: learned to work collectively in a group and that all rights are interconnected, use this style of lesson more often, learned fast decision making and to listen to opinions of others.] (Human rights lesson)
>
> Students formed own meaning of importance of elections by participating in one. [Student comment; learned about system and how to vote.] (Elections lesson)
>
> They wrote a petition, strong lesson because it was concrete, best to this

point. [Student comment: learned about modes of protest or complaint about environmental problems; rights to join organizations on a voluntary basis; learned about writing a petition.] (Civic community lesson)

I made a discussion of being a good listener a starting point for discussing free speech, tolerance, civil rights; and got student self evaluations. [Student comments: learned to analyze my own qualities and listen to others.] (Citizen and the state lesson)

I added material about styles of meeting, agenda, report. [Student comments: learned how to organize a public meeting and get information about our community; rights to decide about public affairs; preparing to contribute to discussion] (Citizen and the state lesson)

Students may get less quantity of knowledge, but what they acquire is deeper and will last longer because they made their own conclusions. [Students comments: learned today by listening to others' opinions and finding compromises in solving problems.] (Municipality and the individual lesson)

Goals were fulfilled; need more examples of function of currency. [Student comment: I overtaxed my brain by making it really think; it was an exceptional lesson in which I proved to myself that I knew something about the economy.] (Economy and ways to prosperity lesson)

Please bear in mind that these comments have been summarized and excerpted and that they were made as feedback to the lessons before they were revised. Appendix 1 gives much more detail and is organized by lesson.

Data from Focus Groups of Students

In the focus group when asked whether their learning took place primarily because of changes in the content of instruction, the process, or both the large majority of students said that it was because of the process. When asked which of their concepts changed the most toward a better understanding, Freedom and Responsibility were reported to be the most influenced. Most students reported little change in concepts of Minorities, Privacy, and Authority. Both these findings are understandable since there were several lessons focussing on freedom and responsibility and very few on minorities, privacy, or authority as general concepts.

Several students in the focus groups noted that many discussions took place as a whole class rather than in small groups. Among the topics which they singled out as receiving special attention were: how to help the Republic politically and economically (by buying Czech goods), respecting the law even if they didn't agree with it and respecting others as part of

freedom to express opinions, and the important role of participating in decision making in school and other contexts. There was a comment that "the history of political science did not interest us, too many facts and too few sources or references." Several wanted more practical examples (echoing the written responses), discussion, student participation, and current political events. Several groups noted that there was insufficient time, and that they would like to experience this type of instruction more often. A concern which surfaced from a number of students was how they would be graded when methods were used which are new or do not lend themselves to factual testing.

Data from Interviews with Teachers[4]

Although the Czech-American project in many ways constituted a replication (for the Czech Republic) of the cooperative project between the Polish Ministry of Education and the Mershon Center of the Ohio State University [5] one important step forward was made. The evaluation of the lesson scenarios was based on their testing by Czech teachers. This is innovative, since in most previous projects (including the Polish one) the evaluation had been limited to the opinion of American experts (under the assumption that the materials and approaches might be too new and difficult for teachers in post-Communist countries undergoing extensive educational reforms). Accepting teachers as experts for evaluating lessons has many advantages, since both weaknesses in the scenarios and teacher difficulties (especially those reflecting deficits in teacher preparation) can be discovered in this way. (Even the best lesson proposal is not good enough if Czech teachers are not able to carry it out.)

One of the methods for collecting data from teachers was the interview. Two obstacles had to be overcome, first the lack of tradition in recognizing teachers' expertise in this context and, second, the fact that the Czech researchers available for this project lacked experience in interviewing.

Detailed guidelines about how to interview teachers were developed (see Appendix 2) and discussed with researchers during the meeting in January 1997 and through email. They considered the instruction useful and reported that it contributed to the collection of useful data for revision and improvement of lesson scenarios. The main conclusions from the interviews of six teachers are presented below. (In additions to civics, three also taught Czech literature or history, and one was a foreign language teacher).

All the interviewees evaluated the lesson-scenarios positively. They did not have time to familiarize themselves with the full set of scenarios, but two major strengths they found in

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[4]This section relies on material prepared by Barbara Malak-Minkiewicz.

[5]See Richard Remy & J. Strzemieczny (eds.), (1996), *Civic Education for Democracy, Lessons from Poland*, Washington, D.C.: National Council for the Social Studies and ERIC.

those they did review were that they proposed active teaching methods, including useful examples, and that they included helpful resource material.

Active teaching methods.

Teachers view this kind of method as an effective didactic tool and an important element to add to their own didactic equipment. The wish to learn more about these methods was part of their motivation to partcipate in the project, and they were planning to make use of them in other subject lessons. In the opinion of these teachers, active teaching methods are also useful specifically in civic education: contributing to the development of critical thinking, the ability to formulate and express opinions, tolerance for diversity, and work in groups. They also identified several problems related to these methods for both students and teachers. First, they may weaken discipline in that some students may become noisy, while others may refuse to cooperate. Teachers believed that this problem is especially important in post-Communist countries with their overcrowded classrooms and the rigid (almost military) atmosphere which still persists in many schools. As one of them said, "it is not only a matter of teachers; the student need time to adjust to a new method too." Active methods were also perceived as much more demanding in terms of preparation for the lesson, its organization and timing. One teacher said, "during this period (testing of scenarios) I didn't have time to talk to my colleagues, they could see me only in the library or at the copying machine."

Some recommendations that result from the above go beyond this particular project. There is a need to include active teaching methods into the teacher training, including that for in-service teachers. These methods should also be recommended as valuable in teaching various school subjects, not just civics. Such changes might contribute to the improvement of the general atmosphere or climate in school. Policy makers should become aware that teachers need additional, specific incentives to work with active methods, since they are much more challenging, demanding, and time-consuming. Teachers themselves see this problem clearly.

Source Materials.

The interviewed teachers were enthusiastic to find various kinds of authentic source materials that could be used during the lessons as attachments to the scenarios. These materials helped them link discussions to reality. It was quite a new experience for them, in Communist schools they either had to use textbooks or search for original materials themselves (and only the highly motivated did so).

There were also some doubts, however, concerning how these materials could be used. One teacher said, "They gave me the American Constitution, the English Constitution... and I only wanted kids to understand the Czech Constitution." Some teachers suggested that in the lesson-scenarios it should be clearly stated what should be obligatory and what should be optional. These concerns are only partly the result of lack of experience with using

source materials in class. During the interviews, teachers were trying to put tested lessons in the famework of the civics curriculum in their country, reaching conclusions like these: "the themes are the same or similar but in the real curriculum there are ten times as much topics," or "I do not see how these scenarios could be integrated with the existing courses." Teachers seem to suggest that, if programs such as these are to be used broadly, there is a need for specific instruction on how such a program could be integrated into an existing curriculum. This leads to an important recommendation for this and other projects: it should be clear from the beginning whether materials being prepared are meant to replace some of the existing programs, serve as an optional alternative for them, or some combination.

Summary of Evaluation

In this section the strengths and weaknesses of each of the major parts of the project will be assessed from the Evaluator's point of view.

Evaluation of the Planning and Design of the Project.

Strengths:

Although American models were used and American experts consulted, there was a distinct effort to attend to the issues which the Czech participants thought appropriate and approaches which had been honed by experience in a previous project in Poland (see comments above). Lessons learned from other projects contributed to an excellent experience in Iowa City for the authors, in which they were exposed not only to American ideas but to some models developed elsewhere in post-Communist countries and were given a wide range of models upon which they might build.

The interweaving of evaluation throughout the implementation process and the placing of the center of gravity for the evaluation in the Czech Republic (especially the consultation of teachers about the lessons) was an important and positive feature of the project. This is one of the major ways in which aspects of sustainability were gained in the project; in fact two participants spoke especially about how much they had learned about evaluation methodology from taking these responsibilities.

Weaknesses:

Almost all projects aim at too many changes that are expected to take place simultaneously within a social context which is itself changing, making it difficult to designate benchmarks and achievements toward them. In this project also, there were many goals, and they were quite far reaching.

Although one might prescribe less lofty goals for future projects, it is also the case that those who work on these projects usually do so for idealistic reasons. Having lofty goals (fully understanding that not all of them can be achieved) is important to them as part of the

project design. A more limited and less idealistic plan would be less attractive to those required to carry it out (and might not even achieve the minimum levels of support from agencies or foundations, who themselves may be looking for great achievements while underestimating the time necessary to achieve reforms).

Evaluation of Lessons, Development Process, and Trials

Strengths:

The project seemed to be successful in developing a set of lesson scenarios which was well received by teachers and students. It also was successful in promoting a sense of excitement and commitment to the project among most of the participating teachers and opening a dialogue about changes and the importance of incorporating new pedagogical methods and new content. Most participants understood what was expected and wanted more opportunities to explore and practice these methods. Teachers also commented that they felt that these methods were successful in engaging the students in experiences with considerable depth. It also appears that teachers' and students' comments were reflected in the redesign of lesson materials.

Weaknesses:

Extreme time pressure in the Spring of 1997, coupled with shifts in personnel and their assignments in the Czech Republic, resulted in some confusion and in fewer teachers than planned being able to pilot lessons and fewer opportunities for in-depth examination of the experience.

The costs and time required for translation of materials was seriously underestimated. At one point it was planned to translate the lessons back into English, but it became obvious that was prohibitively expensive (and thus the lesson summaries to be found in Appendix 1).

The absence of computers with World Wide Web connections in many of the schools, coupled with lack of confidence on the part of teachers in using such methods meant that the ICONS part of the project could not be fully implemented. However, two individuals received training in the method and may be able to assist in implementation in the future when technical resources become available.

Evaluation of Training and Capacity Building

Strengths:

The project was successful in building capacity and involving individuals at all levels of the educational system in the Czech Republic -- personnel of a governmental institute, curriculum specialists, teachers, and students. Nearly all of these individuals reported

learning from the experience (reflected in personal comments as well as the more formal interviews). Areas where further training is needed, such as pedagogical methods, were also identified.

Weaknesses:

There were some concepts such as "active citizenship" and "cooperative groups" which were hard to translate across cultures. It was not merely an issue of linguistic equivalence but of the need for further dialogue with Czech participants concerning ways to get the core ideas behind these notions into implementable form and ways to formulate training programs to address them.

Variations across teachers in how lessons are taught and how material is used are inevitable (and not a bad thing), some of the newer pedagogical methods need to be addressed in training courses which are formulated with the same attention to the perspectives of different groups as the lessons received.

Evaluation of Communication and Motivation.

Strengths:

The level of motivation was very high. Furthermore, an important message was conveyed by asking students and teachers for their opinions about lessons, and it allowed the adaptation and revision of lessons to meet not only overall goals of the educational system but also the specific needs of teachers and students (including those in vocational tracks).

All the interviewed teachers said that they were very interested and excited when preparing and conducting lessons. They also reported getting new ideas about practical exercises for students as well as new and interesting source materials. If this set of lesson-scenarios could help to revitalize teachers' creativity and give them more satisfaction in their work, this would in itself be a big achievement for the project, because such opportunities were so limited during the period of Communist control and have not expanded quickly enough in the period since.

Weaknesses:

There were communication breakdowns from time to time, resulting from a variety of factors including distance (both between Iowa City and Prague and between Prague and some of the school sites), as well as differences in perspectives between members of the project team. There were insufficient opportunity to monitor parts of the data collection such as interviews. Although training was provided to those who were interviewing, once the heavy flow of the paper rating sheets began they tended to overwhelm all other methods of data collection.

Relating This Project to Other Projects in Post-Communist Countries

Kevin Quigley[6], a former foundation program officer, in a recent review of foundation funding to assist the building of democracy in Central Europe has identified fourteen priorities upon which such assistance has been focussed. Civic education ranks fourteenth out of fifteen and pre-university education fifteenth. Higher education has been the first priority receiving more than three times as much as any other priority. Nevertheless, he notes that several program of civic education have received funding and have prospered. In many cases they suffer from the same shortcomings he identified more generally, including lack of "convergence between the goal, assisting democracy and the means chosen (in particular, too extensive reliance on Western partners for program design and implementation)" (Quigley, 1997, p. 108).
He further concluded:

> "Foundations' efforts to assist democracy in the region could have benefitted by significant local involvement in all aspects of their work, from design to implementation to evaluation... Foundations' efforts to strengthen democratic tendencies and encourage democratic values, such as participation, openness, and accountability could have been more effective had they more self-consciously modeled the behaviors they advocated" (Quigley, 1997, p.109).

Further, he noted that foundations are often biased toward the version of democracy in their own national setting and seek to create the rest of the world in that image. Since most foundations providing this funding in the early 1990s were American, he argued that this usually meant in the American image, and failed to take into account the definitions and the local context. He also faulted foundations for paying insufficient attention to evaluation and for failing to involve their local partners in a significant way in the evaluations that were implemented.

He also spoke about the importance of having realistic goals, estimating that many of the stated goals for democratic reform in Eastern and Central Europe are likely to take at least two generations to accomplish. Setting goals that are more modest than full-scale educational or political reform would have provided clearer benchmarks for the evaluation of foundations' programs. Finally, he argued for the importance of empowering local partners and engaging them at every step as essential for sustainability.

Concluding Comments

Taking these general comments based on Kevin Quigley's analysis of foundation programming early in the 1990's, has provided a framework for judging the contributions

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[6]Kevin F. F. Quigley (1997). *For Democracy's Sake: Foundations and Democracy Assistance in Central Europe*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

made by the University of Iowa/Czech Republic project. This project was funded by a U.S. federal agency (not a foundation) and its implementation and evaluation were planned before Quigley's book was available. Nevertheless the designers of this project made substantial steps in the directions that were recommended in *For Democracy's Sake*.

The experience of the Civic Education in the Czech Republic Project effectively built lessons, training, and teacher commitment on the experience of previous projects in this part of Europe. There was definitely an effort in this project to take the Czech context into account, presenting a variety of models and resources and giving free reign to the professional educators to adapt them for Czech use. There was also an effort, largely successful, to make the project a model of openness and democratic participation. The project paid considerable attention to evaluation and involved the Czech participants in that process. The goals were, as in many projects, very high (see previous discussion of the tradeoff implied in choosing less lofty goals). Finally, local partners were clearly empowered by the process. Both the results (in the form of lessons) and the preparation received by the Czech educators to implement and further improve them in the future can be judged as very successful.

APPENDIX 1
Judith Torney-Purta

Lesson Topics, Type of Student Participation, Teacher and Student Feedback

Topic/sub-topics Goals	Student Participation	Feedback/Comments
1. Democracy .concept of democracy .citizen in democracy .values of democracy	Group work Use text/tables Give reasons	I: added discussion about school rules; queries fit to curriculum S: learned contrast of democracy/non-democracy and limits of democracy; learned from cooperation in groups; want more discussion and more modern topics I: left out some text; students realize a different civic and state relationship within democracy; goals clear S: learned about citizens' rights; want more suitable illustrations I: left out role playing substituting discussion about smoking rights; strength in relating traditional and contemporary values; shows necessity of encountering different opinions in democratic society S: learned from research and discussion; did not understand aggressive foreign politics want more discussion, less articles
2. Ideology .shared ideas and principles .concept of religious and political ideology	Search in dictionary Discussion	I: left out some text and graphs; added current newspaper articles and political party programs; students took main role with teacher organizer; knowledge may be more sustainable since emotions were included in learning; maybe less information than in a classical lesson, but a a better quality S: learned about political party orientation; about discussing and tolerating others' opinions; saw hidden symbols in film; found Animal Farm very truthful; want better explanations in textbooks and more examples from real life I: gave more examples; not too much material

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		S: learned what is conservative, socialist; learned that everybody has own opinion; want more material and practical examples, slower explanations
3. Politics .role of politics in society .politics in the life of society .see political forces operating in society and in political problems	Group work on definitions Work with schemes	I: left out 1 article and politics in life of society; added definition of politics (with homework in advance); good in forming students' concept of politics and relating to problems; not enough time to review broad topic S: like communication style of lesson important to learn how to assert opinions; cannot learn that in purely instructional lesson, but could be more fun S: liked activities; did not understand why there is so much hatred among some political parties I: too much material to complete S: learned from my own thinking; learned from independent work
4. The nation and the state in Czech. .T.G Masaryk .Czech state and patriotism .totalitarian state in Stalinist period	Pairwork Individual work	I: left out totalitarian state and added more historical background and different manifestations/patriotism; liked lively reworking of history and that students came to definition of patriotism on their own. S: (all) learned from discussion
5. Tolerance .difference between tolerance and intol. .analyze typical conflicts and causes	Role play Individual research	I: students refused role-play added discussion of racism, gypsies S: learned what toleration means
6. Human rights .documents defining human rights and concepts .were human rights respected in our state? .examples of civic bravery	Group work Individual work	I: left out historical evolution and added discussion comparing respect for human rights in past regime and today S: made knowledge about h.r. more deep S: learned about human rights before and after the revolution I: added explanations; liked the way practical tasks supported previous more theoretical knowledge; students by determining which right is most

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		important understood interconnections and importance of rights for freedom of man; students may get less amount of knowledge but those facts that are gained are deeper and more pertinent because they are based on own experience and emotion; could prepare a video with source documents and times when h.r. were denied (from history of U.S., USSR, Czech Republic, Germany and international trials) S: learned to work collectively in a group and that all rights are interconnected; use this style of lesson more often; learned fast decision making and to listen to opinion of others
7. Constitution and rights and obligations of citizens .define constitution and show its role .relations of constitution/laws .significance of elections in democracy .role of citizens and media in elections .distinguish important from unimportant facts	Pairwork Group work Individual work	I: left out details in Constit. comparison and lessons merged; table on powers of different branches was added; found it a very good lesson, esp. relation between rights/duties S: too much information, want more about actual laws I: added motto, "freedom ends where rights of other person begin.; lessons merged; lesson worked out very well in practice except for groupwork; students did express opinions; could add statistical information S: want more visual aids or statistics
8. Elections .elections in democracy .citizens' responsibility in elections .function of free media in elections	Board game Work with text	I: added chart about election and local representation; students formed own meaning of importance of elections by participating in one S: learned about system and how to vote I: students were active participants S: learned from free discussion with teachers and school mates; more visual aids would help

9. President and government of Czech Republic .executive powers .relation of President, government, Parliament	Work with supplement Individual work	I: added names of present ministers and responsibilities; some materials should be left out, but well done lesson S: learned specific facts I: learned to analyze documents; some were not able to solve problems or relate to it S: learned from reading the Constitution about the President; want more dialogues between teachers and students on a wider set of questions; shorten lesson
10. Parliament and political parties in Czech Republic .structure/function .process of law enactment .classification of parties	Individual work Simulation	I: left out history of founding of political parties; linked to other lessons; students are able to express ideas, understand role of Parliament and duties and distinguish between right and left wing parties and programmes; wants to leave out several parts, including simulation S: learned from discussion
11. Civic community .lobby groups, NGO's, interest groups and their role .forming civic society	Work with media Independent study	I: added homework to name organizations in which students are interested; wrote a petition; strong lesson because it was concrete, best to this point, especially for older students S: learning about modes of protest or complaint about environment probl; rights to join organizations on a voluntary basis; learned about writing a petition I: supplement was missing so used own town; added historical material and reviewed basic rights documents; newspapers weren't used; added material about differences in opinions among people; strong in relating to contemporary citizen in society S: learned about constitutional order and basic rights document; want more activities like this

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12. Citizen and the state .how citizen can make opinions public and listen to others .participating in public meetings (communicating) .civic responsibility in voting, being involved, leadership .identifying and solving problems in public and private .political parties and the citizen	Individual work with questionnaire, essay [analysis of newspaper articles, organize meeting]	I: started with knowledge test about Czech Republic; added map; the best lesson about consciousness of citizenship S: learned from test, lecture, dialogue with teacher; want more visuals I: left out some essay/letter assignments; helpful to add addresses of newspapers, radio at national and regional levels S: learned how to state opinions and write letter to newspaper I: left out teaching about famous speakers; added students' evaluation their presentations; activities were interesting for students S: learned from preparation, public presentation, opinions of others I: added homework about being discussion moderators; made discussion of being a good listener starting point for discussing free speech, tolerance, civil rights; student self-evaluation; want more about comparing face-to-face listening with video S: learned to analyze my own qualities and listen to others; would help to have recording of discussion; would like more extracts I: added material about styles of meeting, agenda, report; students recognized that these topics are important for civic community S: learned how to organize a public meeting, getting information about our community; rights to decide about public affairs; preparing to contribute to discussion; want visit to Parliament; want visit to town committees I: added newspaper article, gave more examples of vandalism and what they would do if they saw it S: want prices of items vandal-might damage I: added analysis of newspaper articles: objectivity and verification; strength was

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		critical analysis of articles S: understood how newspapers may give subjective information; want more concrete materials. I: strength is concreteness S: learned about citizens' rights in a concrete sense I: not enough time for profiles and chart; strengths are stimulating activity of students and critical evaluation S: learned about features of leaders and classmates' opinions I: establishing a civic association might be better than a party S: learned how to establish a party, but add more about comparing party programs before voting and chart about where parties of each country stand I: added points about process of problem solving to chart and discussion about community responsibility S: learned how to face up to problems from practical examples; add more discussion I: no weaknesses, strength in critical point of view S: learned about characteristic of president; want more pictures and real examples I: applied material to improving relationships in the class which was a strength for students' awareness S: learned about improving relationships and role of individual
13. Municipality and individual .difference of state/municipal. .how citizen can influence and solve problems in municip.	Dialogue teacher/ student Prepare written material	I: added examples from everyday life; deepened students knowledge about responsibility and work of authorities and civil laws; students may get less quantity of knowledge, but what they acquire is deeper and will last longer because they made made their own conclusions S: learned today by listening to others' opinions and finding compromises in solving problems; add more work in small groups and practical activities to solve concrete problems.

14. Law awareness .legal system .personal rights and statutory responsibilities .issue of death penalty	Simulation Discussion	I: role of newspapers is difficult for vocational students; divided class into groups of 6; strength in collaboration; add vocabulary list S: learned by working in groups; did not understand censorship or petition I: capital punishment better integrated into lesson; strength was discussion and interest S: learned importance of law for society; learned from discussion; want more examples I: founds parts of topic controversial and left out; added pupil questionnaire about death penalty; students learned from discussion; did not understand some terms S: learned from articles and group work that life is unique and about guilt and innocence; want more examples
15. Legal code .what belongs to legal code .how law is enacted or changed	Discussion Question answer method	I: left out "rule of law;" simplified the chart; strong groups S: learned from self-study of chart and handouts and from discussion I: left out how Parliament works and added material about rule of law S: learned from handouts and groupwork
16. Free market economy .basic economic thinking .production, consumption, distribution	Analysis of text Interview	I: added handout about market; students understood what influence differences in human needs; too many new terms S: learned about competing among students; want more discussion about problems of young people I: added comparison of local, national, international market and those subject to market (enterprises, households, state); strength in distinguishing among human needs; too many new concepts S: learned from communication and comparison with classmates; school should deal more with problems of

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		young people and compare with adults (drugs, money, social issues) I: strength in understanding production, consumption, distribution, also supply and demand; add more about free market mechanism S: learned about free market and private business; how to prosper and come to the top and not bankrupt; learned from discussion; want better explanations and more examples I: added examples of central planning; strong in basic concepts but need better examples S: learned about economic systems; to divide economic spheres; discussion was interesting
17. Economy and ways to prosperity .function of money .banking .role of state in economy	Analysis of text Discussion	I: goals were fulfilled; need more examples to illustrate function of currency S: learned about function and value of currency; overtaxed my brain by making it really think; it was an exceptional lesson in which I proved to myself that I know something about economy; our younger classmates did not understand I: added material about banks; such as relation to foreign banks and difference between cash/non-cash; too much to explain; hard to understand recession; need more examples from practical life S: learned what to beware of in banks, basic services and financial reserves; didn't understand recession or inflation; want speaker who works in a bank; too much subject matter; had to think a lot. I: added intervention of state into economy and newspaper article; students discussed a variety of economic problems; some students made negative statements about economy S: learned about state's task in economy; learned from exchange of opinions want more examples, video
18. Problems of	Group work	I: added overpopulation, hunger,

contemporary world .AIDS .drugs/alcohol .violence and terrorism	Audiovisuals	countries in debt; students defined problems and attempted solving some of them S: learned about problems that involve our lives; don't under- why we don't fight more against these problems; add discussion with persons or organizations with responsibilities for such situations I: added photographs; should add a suitable video S: statistics were most useful, however, many knew about drugs already. I: students should not close their eyes to these problems S: lesson was clear and understood I: students learned about causes, roots, consequences, and protection against violence; could use video S: didn't understand what our state does to protect against violence and why people are passive; want video and real examples
19. Ecology, economy, and politics .how students can contribute to solve problems of environment	Pairwork Work with supplements	I: added material from a textbook S: learned that there are problems of ecology relating to economy and politics I: added concrete figures about our region and national parks, also material from a textbook; good lesson for its concreteness S: learned from newspapers and statistics
20. World community and nation .international organizations like UN and NATO .deepen independent thinking .appreciate the importance of organizations	Work with maps and tables Groupwork	I: left out NATO; added a chart about international organizations; want more charts and graphs, clearer instructions needed for some classes and ways to make more interesting with examples S: it would be more interesting to analyze newspaper articles and to have a more intelligible text

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		I: added foreigners' views on CR (material on sport, art, music, inventions); strength in supporting civic pride and realizing our priorities S: realized importance of pride and responsibility of CR in the world I: added chart about international organizations and speech by Havel S: learned about world communities, internet, NATO and its origins
21. European Community .EU and cooperation .CR and the EU .need for personal involvement in links in Europe	Groupwork Text analysis	I: students realized what is necessary to do for European integration; many students didn't have facts about EU S: learned from discussion and writing an interpretation of history and objectives of EU; want more charts; didn't understand embargoes I: didn't choose a land for travel and didn't simulate a parliament; strength that students had time to discuss; students didn't understand duties to EU S: understood values of CR and EU authorities; learned from discussion of parties' positions; didn't understand arguments against entrance to EU; didn't understand European Parliament; want a video, more examples and material about advantages and disadvantages

APPENDIX 2

Barbara Malak-Minkiewicz

Some notes on interviewing teachers

(Prepared for the Czech - American Project on Civic Education)
February 1997

Type of the interview and its characteristics

The main goal of the interview in this project is to collect in-depth information from the pilot teachers who tested civics lesson scenarios. The content of the interview should be developed on the base of the data included in the short feedback questionnaire filled in after each lesson by both teacher and students. The researchers have to learn in detail *what* worked/didn't work, *why* and possibly – *how* the lesson could be changed/improved. The subject of the interview and characteristic of the interviewee decide about how it should be prepared and conducted.

Two aspects of interviewing should be taken into consideration here: the extent to which the interview is supposed to be **standardized**, and the extend to which interviewees will be willing to **disclose the information**.

(i) In the fully standardized interview, the investigator defines the questions and the problems. He/she is looking for answers within a frame set by his/her presuppositions. On the other extreme there is a fully non-standardized interview: the interviewee serves as an 'expert' who teaches the interviewer what the problem, the question, the situation is. The type of interview that seems to be most suitable for the project under consideration (collecting evaluative data form the teachers who tested in the classroom practice lesson scenarios) is located somewhere in between these two extremes: problems and issues are to some extend defined in advance but there are pilot teachers who are experts on evaluation of the specific lesson scenarios they tested. This is the so called **guided** or **focused interview** (there are selected topics around which the interview is carried out).

(ii) Although it can be assumed, that since a person agreed to be interviewed, he/she wants to disclose information he/she possess, this is not always the case. For example, politicians usually want to be interviewed but they do not want to make public 'everything' they know on the subject. There is not such a problem in the case of the interviews under discussion: from definition the interviewer and the interviewee have the same goals to find out the strong and week points of the lesson scenarios. Thus the main task of the interviewer is to help the pilot teacher to **articulate his/her opinions**. There is one problem however that makes this common task 'not common' in one respect: the teacher may want to hide from the researcher any information that he/she considers might suggest his/her professional shortages. The failure or success of a lesson is always the result of program-teacher interaction and of course each teacher knows this. This means that the teacher may try to down play what he/she thinks (even if inadequately) was his/her personal "fault". On the other hand – this information may

be very important for the researcher because even the 'very best' lesson scenario is not good at all if it does not fit possibilities of many teachers.

The interviewing teacher as an expert

Three important characteristics of expert in the context of a interview have to do with his/her **status and competencies**, **lack of anonymity**, and **proficiency in being interviewed**.

(i) 'Experts usually feel and behave like experts' means that very often they want to take over the leadership from the interviewer. They want to define a situation for themselves, explain how they see it, what the real important problems are as they view the matter. In the case of teachers however (and for sure in the post-communist part of Europe) this issue is more complicated. On the one hand – teachers are considered to be (indisputable) experts for students and (often) for their parents. On the other – they are rarely treated as experts by educational policy makers, curriculum developers and/or authors of textbooks. They feel very often "underestimated", frustrated, not recognized with their expertise rooted in educational practice. Keeping this in mind, if researchers in this project want interviewed teachers to feel and behave as experts, they need to assure them that they are experts, that their competencies are highly appreciated.

(ii) It is usually difficult to assure anonymity of an expert, e.g. some of them are broadly known and their opinions are broadly known. It requires thus special measures to protect such persons' identity from being disclosed to third parties. In the case of the project under consideration anonymity is also an issue: there is a small and visible group of pilot teachers being interviewed and they have various relations with the authors of the project. It may produce a feeling of "uneasiness" when expressing negative opinions about tested material.

(iii) Experts are most often proficient in being interviewed and sometimes they may no longer reply to interviewer questions with information from experiences, but with answers, which they learn as proper from previous interviews (and interviewers). A majority of teachers do not have such experiences. They have however a very specific sense of the 'properness' of answers (originated from the student-teacher relation) and may report not what they 'think about the issue' but 'what they think they should think about the issue'. On the other hand – teachers 'want to teach': they are often 'talkative' persons, they are sensitive on being listened to and understood. This is an advantage.

Some suggestions for getting, conducting and recording interviews

The most universal rule for specialized interviewing is that the best way to interview in a concrete situation depends upon that situation (including the skills and personalities of the interviewer). But in any case, in advance of each interview some aspects of it should be carefully thought through. The most important are:

(i) What sort of relationship should the interviewer establish with the interviewee? Many experts in the field argue that the interviewer should try to get cooperation by deliberately seeking to establish '**neutrality on the interviewers side**': sympathetic understanding, willingness 'to talk informant's language'. In some specific situations this technique doesn't work: sometimes interviewer can not identify him/herself with

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the interviewee's values and opinions, sometimes – the only result of the interviewer's support is a not very useful type of informant's behavior: *'everything is just great, material is great, lessons are great, students are great, I am great'*. In such circumstances '**neutrality against the interviewee**' can be adopted (which may even lead to a kind of dispute). This more assertive technique is sometimes useful in interviewing teachers (who adopt sometimes a behavioral pattern of the 'best student in the classroom', who wants to please the interviewer). It is not recommended however for persons who are not very much experienced in interviewing. A more careful approach is to be advised instead: '**conscious role playing**' (e.g. the teacher might be asked about possible problems with the lesson scenario which would be faced by somebody who is much less experienced than he/she; the interviewer may ask questions from the position of the 'devil's advocate' at the same time expressing his/her personal agreement with the interviewee's opinions).

(ii) What does the interviewee get out of the interview? Probably, the greatest value which many interviewees receive - the reason why they enjoy the interview - is the opportunity to teach. This is probably why a simple *'teach me'* approach of the interviewer seems to be more useful than others. Teaching provides the informant with a chance to articulate his/her ideas and to present the importance of his/her job. The simple opportunity to talk to somebody who understands, whose comments are relevant, but who will not make any further claims (an 'understanding stranger') can also provide a pleasant experience. All of this makes teachers easier than any other group to be interviewed. One should stress however that the *'teach me'* approach is something else that the *'tell me everything'* approach. This latter method can lead to the collection of a large amount of possibly interesting but not always relevant information. In addition, some more 'task oriented' interviewees get angry with the vague questions about 'everything' as if interviewer did not know his/her job.
It happens sometimes that researchers are confronted with expressed or implied request by the interviewee for a 'small token of appreciation' (e.g. good opinion about informant expressed in the front of the supervisor). Besides the ethical ambiguity of such procedures one should be aware of the danger it may bring for the project and researchers themselves. It can involve them into interpersonal and political struggle and conflicts.

(iii) How to introduce the interview? For any interview an informed commitment of the interviewee is required. It is therefore important that that the introduction is clear and does not bear any ambiguity. It is usually recommended that the introductory description of the interview's purpose should not be too complex and should not include too much details. This is first, because the more complex the information is, the higher the possibility is that the interviewee will doubt whether he/she will be able to perform well (and may feel embarrassed and tense). Too much information may also bias the course of the interview: the interviewer can not predict all possible 'hidden assumptions' about the situation that interviewee can produce. The explanation must be couched in more general terms and should include the same information for all interviewees (such a standard introduction could be developed by researchers in advance). Along with a description of the task it should include clear information on why and how the interview results will be used. It is also recommendable to check at the beginning of the interview what the interviewee thinks about the purpose and potential

usefulness of such an interview (it helps the researcher to learn and to eliminate some interviewee's 'hidden assumptions').

(iv) How and where to arrange the interview? The general advice is that the interviewer has to adjust to the interviewee preferences. One should accept any time he/she proposes, if at all possible. The interviewee should also feel free in choosing the place for the interview, as long as interviewer is sure that this place is quiet and gives privacy. This is important because when other people (especially colleagues) are watching the person, he/she is likely to be more careful about his/her actions. Public places such as restaurants, coffee shops, etc. are not recommended: they are noisy, one can meet colleagues there who interrupt the interview, etc. Arranging the interview means also to establish how much time is needed for it. This should be negotiated with the interviewee but when established (and especially when time limits are fixed) should not be exceeded, if possible.

(v) How to present yourself? It is important to explain at the beginning of the interview who you are but it is not easy to tell what information should be included. The interviewee should be assured that you are a qualified person to conduct this interview and that you can be trusted (not having any 'hidden agenda'). Thus you should mention your professional competencies and your professional interest in the project. One should avoid however information which could make the interviewee think that interviewer's expertise is so 'high' that he/she rather wants to examine the informant knowledge rather than to learn something. One also should avoid too much personal information. On the one hand it helps sometimes 'to break the ice', on the other - may not be welcomed by the interviewee who does not want to disclose any personal information by him/herself. In any circumstances the best credentials for the interviewer are those which show quite clearly that one is whom one says to be and that the project in which one is engaged is *bona fide*.

(vi) How to start and proceed with the interview? The interview should start with general question which can be interpreted by the informant in several different ways and out of his/her own experiences. This gives the interviewee from the very beginning great freedom of expressing him/herself without an embarrassing feeling of 'not knowing the answer'.

The whole interview should be organized in the framework of a few such general questions. They should be the same for all pilot teachers while more detailed questions will be specific for each given interview and dependent on its development.

It is recommended that a group of researchers collaborates in the preparation of the interview plan in advance. Feedback sheets filled out by teachers and students based on experiences with lessons can be of a great help for this.

(vii) Taking notes, using tape recorder. There is wide variation between interviewers as to how to take notes. Some believe no notes should be taken during the interview but the majority is just of the opposite opinion. Everybody agrees that the interview should be written down as soon as possible after being completed. To take notes and not loosing contact with the interviewee is especially difficult for the less experienced interviewer. In such a case a kind of standardized report is recommended to be prepared in advance (or at least a list of headings under which responses can be recorded). Tape recording

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gives accuracy but it also has its shortages: transcription is time-consuming and some interviewees do not like to be recorded. It should be carefully considered therefore, especially in post-communist countries, where people still have many fears due to their past experiences.

(viii) Protecting the confidentiality of the interview. The interviewee should always receive assurance that the interviewer himself intends to maintain discretion but also that he has adequate control of the reports or tapes after the interview is completed. The number of people who have access to interviews should be limited to those who really have 'a need to know'. It must be assured that when data leaves the interviewer's hands to the project headquarters office, great caution is exercised there.

Good interviewee and good interviewer

In any interview that interviewee's statements represent nothing more than his perception, filtered and modified by his cognitive and emotional reactions and reported through his personal verbal usage. The interviewer must develop self-consciousness about what is affecting the interviewee, including how he/she himself affects the person.

(i) Sincerity and reliability of the interviewee. The data we collect through interview are never fully consistent. Putting different kind of questions in different ways the interviewer elicits different kinds of 'subjective data': on emotional states, values, attitudes, etc. The interviewee may have a positive opinion about something in one context and a negative one in another, and his observations are by their very nature selective. This selectiveness carries however important information and should not be interpreted as a lack of sincerity of the informant. There are some factors however which may influence his/her reliability and the key question for evaluating data is: what are these factors in given circumstances? The following are likely to be important: **ulterior motives, bars to spontaneity, desires to please interviewer, idiosyncratic factors**. They could be diminished when the interview is conducted in a proper way: in a friendly, good atmosphere, and with full assurance of confidentiality. This is also very important for the interviewee to believe that interviewer's role is of an 'objective researcher': that he/she does not have any 'hidden' purposes and is not in the position to influence the situation. Idiosyncratic factors of connotations and meaning are very difficult to account for. The problem that may arise in the context of the interview under discussion is that some questions may be perceived as enforcing specific ('good' for the interviewer) answers. Some of them could also make the interviewee feel like being examined. A good precaution is to ask questions in many different ways.

(ii) What makes a good interviewer? Three characteristics of the interviewer are of particular importance: **to be a good listener, to have a skill of empathetic understanding, and to have the ability to control the interview**.

Good attention of the interviewer means **efficient** and **concentrated** attention. It happens that the interviewer hears some isolated point and then, instead of listening to the following sentences, he/she proceeds by building upon this point some notion of his/her own, instead of on what the interviewee is trying to say. It is very important therefore to follow carefully and to full extend what speaker is saying, because the assumption that '*I can guess what he/she is going to say*' may be very incorrect.

Usually the interviewer has his/her own opinions and hypothesis about the subject of the interview. Researchers may like some lesson scenarios more than others or may have their opinions on what may be difficult for teachers, interesting (or not) for students. This produces a tendency to test one's own hypothesis and to omit information that seems irrelevant to them. To avoid this, the interviewer has to concentrate fully on the collected field data (on what interviewee says).

Empathetic understanding means the ability to grasp what the other person is experiencing, to feel some of what he/she feels, to share to same extent his/her view of his/her experiences. Though sometimes seems difficult, it is possible to 'put oneself in other person shoes'. Careful observation of the interviewee non-verbal behavior such as gesticulation and facial expression helps to understand better what he/she feels and experiences. It is important not only for the general atmosphere of the interview. Without such a ability the interviewer is not able to ask proper questions at the proper moment.

To control a guided (focused) interview is more difficult than to control an interview which is more formalized. The interview with a vague structure is not a simple question-answer interaction. It sounds like discussion or rather a quasi-monologue stimulated by specific questions and understanding comments. It gives the interviewee the possibility to select issues for the discussion. It is the interviewer's responsibility therefore to keep informant's speaking relevant. Each interviewee has his/her 'own story' that may be interesting but this interview has its own subject and purpose to be fulfilled. Intellectual flexibility and good understanding of 'what is happening' during the interview allow the interviewer to differentiate between 'unexpected' but relevant and 'fascinating' but related to 'another story' information.

To exercise control over the interview requires also a self-consciousness about what is affecting the interviewee, including the interviewer as a person. Whether the researcher wishes or not, interviewing is a social relationship and he/she is a part of this relationship. His/her definitions of the situation and biases are its very important element. It is very difficult to see how these researcher related 'subjective factors' can be avoided completely, but awareness of the problem plus constant self-control can help.

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